TEACHING OF JESUS.

TWENTY LESSONS

BY

EDWARD A. HORTON.

TWELFTH EDITION

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UNITARIAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL SOCIETY, 25 BEACON STREET

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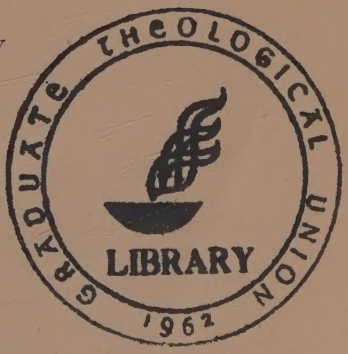

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PREFACE.

The lessons contained in this manual are put into a form best calculated, as it seemed to the author, to meet the wants of the pupils who are beginning seriously the study of the New Testament. The parables in the gospels will always remain the popular and pleasing part of the teachings of Jesus. While it may be said that these story teachings do not include or express the entire scope of the truths contained in Christianity, still they embody enough to represent the essential principles of the "Kingdom of God," which Jesus proclaimed to the world. Of course, there is little theology, as we know it, found in these simple parables; but they reveal the heart of Christian faith, the source of its hope, and the reasons for its love.

EDWARD A. HORTON.

LESSON I.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

LESSON TEXT.—"Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth."—MATT. vi. 10.

I. THE OLD MEANING.

Very many of the lessons to follow begin, "The kingdom of Heaven is like unto," etc.; then comes a striking picture, or parable. Just what each one of these story teachings means we hope to find out as the Sundays go by. But now, on the threshold, let us try to learn what Jesus meant by the words, "kingdom of Heaven," or "kingdom of God"; for he used the two forms speaking of the one idea. First, he did not mean the old thought. Early in history, men described heaven as a place, located far away, high and glorious, to which the worthy went after death. The Jews held this view at first. "God created the heaven and the earth"; "God called the firmament Heaven"; "An angel called to Abraham out of heaven." Of course, "heaven" often meant the sky; but the people at large, in the beginning of things, pictured heaven as a region where God, or the gods, had their home, sometimes visiting the earth. Then came a change, as the world grew wiser, so that, at the time when Jesus began to preach in Judea, the Jews imagined a kingdom to be set up on the earth, in which they were to be the favored ones. Now, secondly, Jesus did not mean this. Some of his disciples made the mistake of supposing that their Master was sure to lead the people to victory, and establish a great, magnificent Jewish government, the splendor of which would shine over the earth, and be like Heaven in its blessings.

II. THE NEW MEANING.

We shall see, step by step, the exact mind of Jesus, when we take up the parables; but in a general way we can say now that he intended by the words "kingdom of Heaven" to teach the value and need of truth, love, and enthusiasm. We can describe the whole matter this way: —

1. Jesus offered a new soul for the old body. He kept the expression, already used by the Jews, and poured a spiritual life into it.

2. There was a higher standard in the new understanding. This kingdom pictured by the Great Teacher was large, free, brotherly, unselfish,—not a place into which ambitious, crowding persons might work their way, but a spirit and condition of character.

3. To have the right to share in this kingdom was a privilege, not of inheritance or social rank, name, or cast, but a reward of personal merit, of character, of righteousness.

4. Jesus demanded zeal and loyalty from all who joined this Republic, or State of God. The old test looked at little acts, and small sins, and obedience to the letter of the Law: the new test regarded the heart, the desire, the aim, and had forgiveness for a thousand mistakes and injuries.

5. In this sense, no one need wait for kings, or courts, or great numbers; the "kingdom of Heaven" might be in one soul, when filled with love to God and love to man. The Heavenly Father is on earth, trying to make it heavenly, through good men and women.

III. SIDE-LIGHTS.

As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.—*1 Cor. xv. 48.*

Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.— *Matt. vi. 32.*

Nothing is farther than earth from heaven; nothing is nearer than heaven to earth.— *Hare.*

As the earth is adorned by the beautiful plants it puts forth, so is he beautified in whose heart dwells the Lord of Life.— *Hindu.*

Our God in Heaven, from that holy place,
To each of us an angel guide has given.
A. A. Procter.

It lies around us like a cloud,—
A world we do not see;
Yet the soft closing of an eye
May bring us there to be.
Harriet Beecher Stowe.

He hides Himself within the love
Of those whom we love best;
The smiles and tones that make our homes
Are shrines by Him possessed.
W. C. Gannett.

Christ's kingdom is a true brotherhood, founded in devotion and self-sacrifice.— *Ecce Homo.*

Jesus taught the grand, redeeming, saving truth, that it is the good, and only the good, who are to be admitted into the kingdom of God. This means that those who have seen and obeyed the laws of God are of necessity in this heavenly kingdom. *M. J. Savage.*

By heaven we understand a state of happiness, infinite in degree, and endless in duration.— *Franklin.*

IV. Class Talks.

How does the Lesson Text apply to this subject? Does the inventor try to bring the "will of God" into the world? What is a "theocracy"? Did the Jews believe in that kind of government? Did not Jesus have something of the same idea in mind? What, then, was the difference? Was every one to be a king, under the rule of God? Do we not speak now of heaven as located somewhere? Is this a contradiction of the statement that "heaven is a condition"? Is not mankind always expecting "a better time to come"? What does it mean, that the world is growing better, or that we must wait till after death (or the great change) before happier conditions can come? Did not Jesus say, This is God's world? Do you believe that love to God and love to man is enough to bring heavenly life? Did Jesus say that a creed, or a ritual, or certain forms would admit to this kingdom? Will you put in your own words just what you think about all this?

V. To Teachers.

There are three important points in this lesson. 1. Show how Jesus did not destroy, but fulfilled the Jewish idea of the kingdom of Heaven. 2. Make clear that he taught the beauty and eternity of a Republic of God, into which any one, however humble, might enter if the heart and spirit were right. 3. Prepare the way for the lessons to come, showing that Jesus had this idea in mind all the time, and was not aiming at a church, or theology, or personal glory and power.

LESSON II.

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE.

LESSON TEXT.—"Seek ye first His [the Father's] kingdom and His righteousness."—MATT. vi. 33.

I. THE PARABLE.

The kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls; and having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

ALSO THE PARABLE OF THE "HIDDEN TREASURE": The kingdom of Heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found, and hid; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. (Matt. xiii. 45, 46, 44.)

II. THE MEANING.

1. There is, first of all, a meaning in the "pearl" parable which belongs to the time and the place where it was spoken. Think of the men and women who gathered around Jesus, as he taught out in the roads of Galilee and by the lakeside. They were full of thoughts as to raising sheep, and getting crops, and driving bargains. They were working hard, just as people are nowadays, to make money and to be known among neighbors as important. Jesus wanted them to understand that religion, as he presented it, was of chief value. If they could see things as he did, all their struggling for this and that cheap object would stop; they would lay hold of his truth, follow him, and help bring the "kingdom" he described. So he took this pearl-buyer as an example. "You see," Jesus said, "he knew enough to invest in the great specimen, the rare and precious one, giving up all the cheaper sort to get it. Why will not you, who listen to me, be as wise? You are clinging to the poor kind of life, when you ought to live after a nobler pattern."

2. Then, as the people seemed to stir and look at one another, as much as to say, "There is force in what this Prophet tells us," Jesus added another parable:—

One of your neighbors was digging and ploughing, the other day, in his field; and he came upon an iron box, that some one had buried there years and years ago, thinking it would be safe from robbers. But he died suddenly, or was killed in war, and the whole thing was forgotten. When your friend discovered the box of treasure, he covered it again, and went to the owner of the farm, saying, "I have leased this ground and paid rent, now I want to buy it; what do you ask me in payment?" The owner sets a high price; but the man goes home, sells a great many of his household goods, and returns with the price of the land. It is his, and all that it contains; then is he happy and prosperous.

That is what the "Hidden Treasure" meant, when Jesus told the story; and he may have added: "Why are ye not as careful, thrifty, and wise as that neighbor of yours, who knew enough to secure the buried box of money? Lo! the gospel is preached unto you, and the way is open. Repent, turn; what advantage is it if you gain the whole world, but lose the treasures of the soul? By

accident you have come here to hear me, and hidden treasures of God's goodness are brought to light. Leave all other smaller hopes and take this opportunity to live hereafter as children of God."

3. There are also meanings in this parable of the great pearl, that run out into every-day life, which we ought not to forget. If we have anything to do in life, we must throw our whole soul into it. The great trouble with young people is half-heartedness. Concentration is the secret of true success,— faith in our plan and earnestness in carrying it out. All those who have been leaders in history — reformers and benefactors — gained their power by the sacrifice they made of small pleasures and petty desires. Let us learn also, from these parables, the lesson of progress and growth. He who has a teachable mind is always finding "hidden treasure" of knowledge and education. He who is filled with the spirit of humility learns to discard one conceit after another, and so gets at last the great pearl of character. The real disciple is always going higher and seeing more.

III. SIDE-LIGHTS.

This one thing I do.— *St. Paul.*

He did it with all his heart and prospered.— *2 Chronicles.*

Let thine eyes look right on.— *Proverbs.*

Buy the truth and sell it not.— *Proverbs.*

Every great and commanding movement in the annals of the world is the triumph of enthusiasm.— *Emerson.*

One thought I have, my ample creed,
So deep it is and broad,
And equal to my every need,—
It is the thought of God.
F. L. Hosmer.

A thousand little motives never will make one great one.— *J. F. W. Ware.*

Perhaps no one is so satisfied with himself that he never wishes to be wiser, better, and more holy.— *Theodore Parker.*

Thy law is a lamp unto my feet,
And a light unto my path.
Psalms.

IV. CLASS TALKS.

Why is religion called the greatest thing in the world? Does it not include all else, when rightly understood? Is not one great evil in life, that people run after little objects, and lose sight of the great ones? Why is this so? Do you think the man who found the treasure did wrong to go and buy the land? Was not the custom, for him who found to have? Were not pearls prized in the Old World? Do you see any point in the fact that a pearl is always just the same, not requiring any polishing and cutting? Is not that so of true religion? Does it need any decoration? Can you give instances of the power of concentration? If a man wishes to win in a boat race or a game, must he not train for it? Does he not sacrifice time and comfort? Why not in higher things? Does goodness come by chance? Can we find truth and be Christ-like without effort?

V. TO TEACHERS.

Here is opportunity to enforce two distinct truths: 1. The greatness of religion and the beauty of the teachings of Jesus. 2. On a lower plane, the important principle, that a noble career in life can be wrought out only by energy, steadily and intelligently exerted toward a given end.

LESSON III.

THE HOUSE ON THE ROCK.

LESSON TEXT.—"The foundation of God standeth sure."—2 TIM. ii. 19.

I. THE PICTURE.

Every one therefore which heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, which built his house upon the rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof. (Matt. vii. 24–27.)

II. WHAT THE PICTURE TELLS.

Jesus loved the picture way of talking. It is the same as poetry. He could catch the attention of the people and hold it better by this way; it waked up the mind and opened windows. Listeners thought they did most of the reasoning, and so felt more friendly, because they were led along and attracted, and not scolded or argued into being members of the new kingdom.

This description of the House on the Rock is not exactly a parable; it is a seed one, capable of being grown into a full blossom. It is more an allegory, like the Vine and the Branches, or the Way. But all are pictures. What this one means it is not difficult to see.

One day, Jesus, after talking to a crowd of listeners, wanted to make them understand that what he had asked them to believe was of no use to them unless they practised. He saw the fishermen, and farmers, and citizens nod in approval, and say: "That is so; the young Prophet tells the truth. How beautiful are his words!" Jesus did not seek applause, as some speakers do. His heart was sad as he feared how the people would scatter, go home and forget to *do* what they admired. Just before ending his talk his face grew more earnest, and his voice tenderer; then he described the two builders, one on sand, the other on rock. It went home. The people had been through one of the furious storms that often sweep over Eastern lands; and many a cheap, hasty piece of work, on surface earth, had gone down. Of course, the application was made at once. What were the meanings then, what are they now?

1. Jesus was always calling the Jews to be real, genuine, sincere. The cause of his persecution was in the fact that he exposed the hypocrisy of the priest, and showed the hollowness of the ordinary religion of the times. He demanded honesty and sincerity: "You praise my gospel; then go and *do* the things you commend. There is no other foundation that is secure."

2. There is no easy, luck road to virtue, goodness, and character. As Luke says, the man dug and found the rock, and carefully built on it. As much depends on what is not seen as on the part above and in sight. The basis of a religious life is in the hidden sources of personal thought and ideals; if they are deep and strong, all is well. Character is not made in a day. We must be patient,

and lay the foundations of our Christian faith on solid granite of truth, works, and sacrifice.

3. More than all this, Jesus is the Teacher who comes into the School of Life, and makes us learn this lesson: That we cannot cheat God; that his laws are sure to be enforced; that in the end goodness will triumph over selfish smartness; that the meek inherit the earth; that all things work together for good to them that love God and obey his will. Sorrow, loss, poverty, death, may beat on the true soul, but "the foundation of the God-faith standeth sure."

III. SIDE-LIGHTS.

Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.— *Psalms.*

When the whirlwind passeth, the wicked is no more; but the righteous is an everlasting foundation.— *Proverbs.*

Let a man learn that everything in nature, even motes and feathers, go by law and not by luck, and that what he sows he reaps.— *Emerson.*

That men should be true to their best convictions, and do their simple duty, this is the blessing that gives all blessings with it, and is the foundation of all charity and progress.— *Phillips Brooks.*

Do noble things, not dream them, all day long,
And so make life, death, and the vast forever, one grand sweet song.
Charles Kingsley.

Faithfulness and sincerity are the highest things.— *Confucius.*

Work is of a religious nature; work is of a brave nature, which it is the aim of all religion to be.— *Carlyle.*

It appears throughout the Sermon on the Mount that there was a class of persons whom Jesus regarded with peculiar aversion, — those who call themselves one thing and are another.— *Ecce Homo.*

Abide not in the realm of dreams,
O man, however fair it seems;
But with clear eye the present scan,
And hear the call of God and man.
W. H. Burleigh.

IV. CLASS TALKS.

What do you think is the chief point in this story? Do different churches interpret it various ways? Is Christ the foundation, or the truth which he gives to build with? What is there in the words of the same chapter, "Not those that cry Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom," that throws light on this picture? Can belief and works be separated? Must we not believe something and know something first? But what becomes of knowledge when it is not used? How can we make the world better, by talking or by doing? Why did Jesus speak so severely about hypocrites?

V. TO TEACHERS.

There are three key words to this lesson,— FOUNDING, SINCERITY, DOING. Search for illustrations in biography; ask your scholars to mention every-day examples of the two types presented. In addition, look up accounts of Palestine life with regard to storms and dangers to houses. Remember: "The world is an immense picture-book of every passage in human life."

LESSON IV.

THE LEAVEN.

LESSON TEXT.—"A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."—GAL. v. 9.

I. THE PARABLE.

The kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. (Matt. xiii. 33.)

II. BAD LEAVEN.

When we look through the Bible, we find that many times the people are warned against sour leaven, bad leaven, the leaven of evil and wrong. This we ought to expect. We know that yeast, which is the "leaven" of the parable, often grows old and musty; then, when it is put into dough, what follows but failure in the shape of bread not fit to eat? So we must begin this lesson by understanding that we might make a parable which would read this way: The kingdom of evil is like unto old leaven, which a careless baker put into his bread, and the whole was made bad. Good motives and bad ones are both able to spread wonderfully fast.

III. WHAT JESUS MEANT.

We can easily see several things Jesus had in mind when he taught this truth:—

1. My kingdom of goodness, love, and truth will spread faster than the opposite. Jesus saw that the people had little hope. They bowed down to power; they envied the successful wicked. It is so now. Many persons advise a young man to be "smart" and mean, in order to win in life. The Great Teacher wanted his listeners to believe that the spreading power of virtue and kindness and honesty was greater than the power of selfishness and deceit.

2. Another lesson he gave. You may remember a text in the Old Testament, "Out of the heart are the issues of life." Jesus put this parable on to that text, though he did not say so. The kingdom of Heaven is like a sweet song-bird caged in the heart, and it sings until the whole soul hears it and is glad. The housewife "hid" the leaven in the meal, and then it worked out, through, and over all parts of the dough. What we love, what we admire in our hearts, is sure to color and shape our characters.

3. We also learn from this parable the law of atoms, or persons. We cannot make Christianity out of anything but men and women; each one must be touched, made alive, and then the whole is improved. Jesus could see plainly, as he went about "doing good," that many curious persons laughed, and said: "Does he hope to get a kingdom by converting one here and one there? A long time he will be about it." They meant, he never would succeed. But, just as in chemistry you must have atoms

all alike to produce what you want, so there is no use in expecting a "good time coming" in the world until the separate men and women are good, true, and brave.

4. Now, when some one person is in "dead earnest," see how the leaven of his influence spreads, and the whole lump of society is changed for good. Your little word, your earnest act, may leaven many lives.

5. Then, look back and see how the words of Jesus have come to pass. When he was put to death on the cross, what a small, weak company were his disciples! Who would have said that great nations should take his name, and history be stamped all over with his teachings?

IV. Side-lights.

Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.— *Matt. xvi. 6.*

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.— *Beatitudes.*

The word is very nigh to thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.— *Old Testament.*

Each heart is a world. You find all within yourself that you find without.— *Lavater.*

This personal dealing with men, one by one, . . . justifies the reformer's enthusiasm.— *James Martineau.*

For not in far-off realms of space
The Spirit hath its throne:
In every heart it findeth place
And waiteth to be known.
F. L. Hosmer.

Goodness consists not in the outward things we do, but in the inward thing we are. To be is the great thing.— *E. H. Chapin.*

V. Class Talks.

Can you divide people into two classes,—those who believe in progress and those who do not? Have not many Christians almost denied this parable, saying that goodness will not conquer evil? What are the different ways of applying this thought of leaven, or yeast? If we admire some good example, do we not rise toward it? If you put musk into a drawer, far in one corner, will it not perfume the whole? If a boy is loyal to a friend, does not that "leaven" his whole life? Does it not seem hard to believe in the final victory of justice over injustice in the world? But does not this parable teach it? Can we be anything but animals, without hope in the heart and leavening truths in the mind?

VI. To Teachers.

Here is a good time to touch two or three points of general interest in the whole course of lessons. Show that teaching by parables, or stories, stirs what is in one's mind, and brings it out; that Jesus used the common objects of life; that he always taught confidence in the working of what was for the best, in this world, over the bad; and that he looked to individuals, the real men and women, as the ones to remain where they were, and make the "kingdom of Heaven."

LESSON V.

THE MUSTARD SEED.

LESSON TEXT.—"Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."—LUKE xii. 32.

I. THE PARABLE.

The kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. (Matt. xiii. 31, 32.)

II. THE LEAVEN.

We need to go back to the last lesson, in order to get a better idea of this one. The parable of the leaven meant, first and foremost, that the good which Jesus wanted done in the world must start from *within*,—from the heart, from the "hidden" thought and wish. What we long for, that we are. We grow to be what the secret desire aims for. And Jesus carried the meaning on farther, saying that, if a few disciples were filled with his spirit and devotion, the "lump," or mass, of people would be touched and made over. Nothing could resist: God is on the side of truth and right.

III. THE MUSTARD SEED.

Seeing that this was not enough, Jesus, at another time, told the story of the mustard-tree. He had heard some of his followers muttering, and making answer out of their doubts. They were not fully convinced; they were wondering how a "kingdom" could come in the way Jesus was working; everything seemed so small and weak in their beginnings. So, at the first opportunity, the Master described this growth of the "smallest of seeds." A mustard seed is not the smallest; but a saying existed among the Jews, to indicate littleness, "Small as a mustard seed." Jesus made his teaching forcible by using popular terms. So small as easily to escape notice, but having in it the power of branching out and being a home for birds. In warm countries the plants that are small with us come to be tall and tree-like.

IV. THE MEANING.

The keyword to the leaven parable was, Within. The keyword to this one is, Faith. In the former picture we were asked to look at the source, or centre, of religion; in this one we are bid to act as patient, faithful, loyal believers. We can illustrate this.

1. What is a church, with its building, Sunday worship, Sunday-school, minister, choir, congregation, and committees? This is the mustard seed of faith in God and man taking form and branching out.

2. There were the Pilgrims, years ago, and the Puritans, mustard-seed colonies, small and weak, planted on the coast of

New England; now behold a republic in which free men make their homes, a vast Christian organization.

3. Jesus wanted us to understand that we do not need to watch and "observe"; "the kingdom of God cometh not by observation." All we need to do is to follow what the leaven parable teaches, and trust for the rest. When persons are all stirred, and feel the "kingdom" coming in their lives, then they say, Let us build it together; let us organize; let us leave something behind for others. All this takes care of itself, said Jesus. The mustard seed knows enough to reach out and up and around, and be a great tree, if you will only give it room and nourishment.

4. The trouble is that many Christians have thought too much about making a big tree; they want show, and size, and bigness. Jesus always warned against this. He said, Plant humility, and prayer, and sacrifice, and honest love, and little every-day acts; the trees will surely come, the great trees of Christian commonwealths and Christian churches.

5. The two parables seem to run across each other, but you will see how they differ; and, if you will recall how anxious and troublesome certain disciples were at one time, waiting to know *when* the "kingdom" would come, and *how*, and *where*, and what positions they should have, you will understand how Jesus tried to fill them with faith, and higher ideas, in this description of the mustard seed.

V. LOOKING AHEAD.

The religion of Jesus — love to God and love to man — seems too simple to many for victory in this world. But every seed hath a body whereby to clothe itself, and God has made it so. Small as this "creed" seems, it has in it the capacity to expand and meet the needs of all mankind. Have faith in it, give it support, stand for it, and as time rolls on we shall see its splendor in actual organized results more and more.

VI. CLASS TALKS.

Have the great movements in history come from small beginnings? What has been the chief trait in reformers? What do you mean by "faith"? Can we hope to know everything? Can any one explain why a seed grows into a tree? But since we know the facts we go forward and plant, do we not? How does this apply to religion, and to the teaching of Jesus? What is the first thing Jesus asks, that we build a church, or that we build character? Which is the greater, the temple or the worshipper in it? Did Jesus make any comparison? Where? What is the difference between a reasonable faith and a blind one?

VII. SIDE-LIGHTS.

If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed.— *Matt. xvii. 20.*

He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.— *Isaiah.*

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.— *St. Paul.*

Never think that God's delays are God's denials. Hold on; hold fast; hold out. Patience is genius — *Buffon.*

Strike from mankind the principle of faith, and men would have no more history than a flock of sheep.— *Bulwer Lytton.*

LESSON VI.

THE TALENTS.

LESSON TEXT.—"Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things."—MATT. xxv. 23.

I. THE PARABLE.

For it is as when a man, going into another country, called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to each according to his several ability; and he went on his journey. Straightway he that receiveth the five talents went and traded with them, and made other five talents. In like manner he also that received the two gained other two. But he that received the one went away and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. Now after a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and maketh a reckoning with them. And he that received the five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: lo, I have gained other five talents. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. And he also that received the two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: lo, I have gained other two talents. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. And he also that had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering where thou didst not scatter: and I was afraid, and went away and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, thou hast thine own. But his lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I did not scatter; thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received back mine own with interest. Take ye away therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath the ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away. And cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matt. xxv. 14-30.)

II. THE TEACHING.

1. There was a particular meaning in this parable Jesus intended at the time; we will notice that before we mention other points in this familiar passage. He saw the fear and the cowardice among those who were calling themselves his followers. They were not doing all they might: they were hanging back, halting, waiting to see what would come, half convinced, but cold. Jesus warned them. He said: You have received light, you have opportunities, the truth has been told you; now you will be held to account in the judgment. Use these privileges or suffer, use them according to your ability: no more is required.

2. Of course, this is just as true now; but we see how it applied then. The parable of the talents is very much like the one of "The Pounds," found in Luke xix. Leaving out certain differences of no great importance, we find from both much the same instruction. The first truth for us to learn is this: that we are in this world to grow, to use our faculties. All persons of sound minds are accountable.

3. The next thing to learn is that these gifts or possibilities are different. Some are born with more, some are situated so as

to have more outside helps. Not far along in life we can tell what our "bent," or power, is. Yet some wait long to be led and directed into a happy, useful path. We must, as boys and girls, try to understand ourselves, and see what God wants us to do. All honorable work is noble; the paths are many, but the goal is one.

4. Then, as the parable is told us in experience, we find that we are not excused because only one talent seems to fall to our lot, while others possess more. The "unprofitable servant," who kept his money in a napkin, was severely rebuked. His punishment was to be alone, in the darkness of regret and shame, with a conscience that would not let him sleep. Perhaps he "came to himself" afterward, and did better, having learned wisdom through bitter suffering. The parable does not go as far as that. There are no small, unimportant talents. The trivial affairs of life sometimes become first-rank; circumstances bring this about.

5. The parable teaches us also that credit is not due the most to him who does a great deal with a great deal. He who accomplishes much with little shall receive the highest applause. Perhaps the master of those servants was waiting anxiously to give the greatest praise to the owner of the one talent, expecting that he had done his best with the small amount he had. Jesus was always teaching that not the largeness of a deed, but the spirit of any act, gave the value.

6. This world is a place where we are tested, not once and for all, as some teach; but we are "stewards," as Jesus said, and our Maker beholds what we do and are. Divine gifts are ours,— reason, memory, imagination, sense of right, love of truth: all this, and more. If we are faithful over the "few things" of this world, our privileges are greater in the next life. We shall be "set over many" more things because of our fitness.

7. It often seems cruel to many, as they read this parable, that from him who hath not is taken the little in hand, and it is given to the man with two or five talents. This looks like the hard way of a grasping world. But herein lies a simple law: Exercise and use your native powers, or you will lose them. Exercise your arm, or it will wither; use your mind, or it will leave you; practise your conscience, or you'll soon have none. Take off the napkins of idleness or error or self-deceit from the truth you already know, or the Lord of life through his laws will rebuke you.

III. Class Talks.

Do you believe that all persons are born "equal"? What would you call a man with "five talents"? What is a "genius"? Are most persons "one-talent" people? Is every one clearly marked out for this or that work in life? Do you call this parable a cheerful and encouraging one? What have some theologians made out of it? Has it anything to do with "Judgment Day"? When and where is "Judgment Day"? To whom ought we to give more credit, to the very talented or to the one-talented? Is it not easy for some to be good? Ought we not to be thankful that God is our judge, not man?

IV. Side-lights.

They call thee rich; I call thee poor,
Since, if thou darest not use thy store,
But savest it only for thine heirs,
The treasure is not thine, but theirs.

Cowper.

No man is born into this world whose work is not born with him.— *Lowell.*

It is very easy to be interested in the man of five talents or in the man of one talent. But, as we look at life longer, we feel more and more the importance of their less sensational brother, the man of the two talents.— *Phillips Brooks.*

LESSON VII.

THE SOWER.

LESSON TEXT.—"The field is the world."—MATT. xiii. 38.

I. THE PASSAGE.

Behold, the sower went forth to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the birds came and devoured them: and others fell upon the rocky places, where they had not much earth: and straightway they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And others fell upon the thorns; and the thorns grew up, and choked them: and others fell upon the good ground, and they yielded fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He that hath ears, let him hear.

Hear then ye the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the evil one, and snatcheth away that which hath been sown in his heart. This is he that was sown by the wayside. And he that was sown upon the rocky places, this is he that heareth the word, and straightway with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while; and when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway he stumbleth. And he that was sown among the thorns, this is he that heareth the word; and the care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. And he that was sown upon the good ground, this is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; who verily beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. (Matt. xiii. 4–9; 19–23.)

ALSO, THE SEED GROWING SECRETLY. So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how. The earth beareth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is ripe, straightway he putteth forth the sickle, because the harvest is come. (Mark iv. 26–29.)

II. WHO SOWS?

Jesus is the great sower in the light of this story. He loved to be called that. Any one who listened easily understood the figure. Jesus compared his gospel to seeds that would spring up into glorious blossom and fruit. There is no finer way of looking at truth and God's cause than to call them seed, sown in human lives and capable of growing into larger, grander results as the centuries go by.

III. OTHERS SOW.

All who are trying to bring this "kingdom of Heaven" are also scattering the seed of the gospel. The apostles did it; the preachers and saints did it; leaders and reformers have followed the example. The work goes on now.

IV. THE FIELD.

Where is the field over which this seed-sowing extends? Surely not Palestine alone, where Jesus lived and died. Not for any one race or one church is this done. "The field is the world." The "good news" is for all men. In this view we see how telling the parables are that we have set for this lesson. The truth is offered freely to all, but how differently received! Jesus marks four kinds of listeners.

1. Those who are so given to surface things that there is

not depth of mind enough in them to catch and hold the words of seriousness. They may be shallow and frivolous, or they may "get religion" by excitement, and lose it when the novelty is over. Any new stir carries them away.

2. Then there are the weak, sentimental ones. They blossom out in pious beauty when all is prosperous; but a little frost cuts them down, or a drought dries their religion dead. When life is favorable, they believe in God, and speak respectfully of religion. But a little storm of trial sets them all adrift. They complain, grow bitter, and are uncomfortable to all.

3. The third kind receive the words of Jesus in a hard, stony way. Making money, getting office, enjoying life, are too much in their thoughts. The truth is killed: it cannot grow. "Ye cannot serve two masters." These persons are like some New England farms, where in places the ledges are so thick nothing can be planted.

4. But who can picture the tender look on the face of Jesus when he spoke of the last kind of soil,— hearers and followers of a hearty, earnest disposition, who yielded a harvest of good thoughts and deeds, many-fold?

V. The Other Parable.

Another striking picture in words was told by Jesus, which should be noticed here. The farmer who sowed seed, and then trusted to see it come up, teaches a valuable lesson about belief and religious life.

1. We must not expect results in a day. Plants of lovely religious qualities are slow in coming to fulness. The kind word or benevolent act may not always be met with a "thank you." Ingratitude is common. Be patient. Wait. The hidden seed will yet appear.

2. God's truth is slow in growing, but it *grows*. Imitate the farmer: go about other duties; do not stand worrying and watching. The "seed grows secretly." The great thing is to plant in good soil, and trust God.

VI. Class Talks.

Does learning or knowledge alone make good soil? Are our teachers in the day schools "sowers"? Do you think Jesus meant his words alone as being the seed? Is all truth good seed? Why has the teaching of Jesus been called the salvation of the world? Does not Christianity "sow beside all waters"? Must we not give out our truth, and trust it to find root somewhere? Can you think of any other kinds of hearers than those mentioned in the parable? What is the difference between trust in God and selfish do-nothing-ism?

VII. Side-lights.

We must keep ever in mind that the good soil comes as much from God as the seed which is to find there its home.—*Trench.*

It is true, the world naturally demands that the Christian should be an example of good morals, just as we expect wheat should be good for food.—*Thomson.*

There is not a nation or people anywhere that is not, according to its variety, bringing forth fruit to God,— something good answering to its condition.— *Robert Collyer.*

LESSON VIII.

THE BROAD AND THE NARROW ROAD.

LESSON TEXT.—"Though he was a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."—HEB. v. 8.

I. THE TWO ROADS AND GATES.

Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many be they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few be they that find it. (Matt. vii. 13, 14.)

II. WHAT JESUS MEANT IN PALESTINE.

We must remember that in nearly all these sayings of the Great Teacher there is a meaning which applies to the people who were spoken to at the time. Then there is a wider meaning. Jesus gave a warning to his listeners, intended to wake them up, and to take them out of their sleep of carelessness. Perhaps this was his thought: You are going along like a pleasure party, on a broad way; you attend church, and keep the fasts, and outwardly you seem all right. Everything is easy, and you are perfectly satisfied. Broad is this road, there are no ups and downs in it, plenty of room, you stop and have good times when you like, there is no sorrow or anxiety in your hearts. Beware! you are selfish and careless. God wants you to be in earnest and to do something for others. There is a narrow gate and a narrow road of effort and hard work, and conscientiousness. It leads on and up, ever higher toward heavenly things. The broad road is like a smooth way, that leads down and down before you know it, into the swamps and bogs. The broad road is the way of indulgence, and deceit and pleasure-seeking. The narrow road is the way of honesty and sincerity, and noble ambition.

III. AS TO RELIGION.

Jesus meant by this to warn the people against the ordinary religion that was professed. He called it hollow and vain. He saw a snare in its easy terms. His wish was to guide, not to the kingdom of selfish pleasure, but to the kingdom of brotherhood and good will. There was need of plain talk, and Jesus was not afraid to give it. He wanted it understood that, if any one followed the usual advice of the priests and teachers, they would find themselves on the road to condemnation. There were "many" that went that way in his time, and "few" that took the narrow path of discipleship to him.

IV. THE WIDER MEANING.

1. We must not suppose that Jesus intended to teach religion in a hard, gloomy picture. He was sunshine himself, and he made everything bright. Nowhere can we find more beautiful pictures of God's love and the glory of duty, and the joys of life, than in the words of the Master. He called our attention in this description of the two roads to the great law, that we must be on watch if we would keep our good temper or our conscience or our resolutions. It will not do to say, once and for all, "We are Christians, and have had a change of heart, and now all will be easy." We must climb, and go higher in the Christian life.

2. We learn, too, in this lesson that all the helps in the world — money, position, birth in family rank, education — cannot take the place of your own will, your personal effort. Even a great group of friends around you will not make true success. The road of merit and victory lies along the narrow, rocky passes, where you must carefully, boldly, get on by your own watchfulness, clear sight, and strong heart.

3. Again, we are taught that the old truth never fails,— he who runs away from what is unpleasant, and tries to escape difficulty, often loses the best education in the world. The study at school is hard,— a narrow gate,— but it leads to the kingdom of knowledge. The battlefields of the Civil War were awful,— how they crowded thousands into the narrow gate of sorrow and suffering! but through it our nation walked into the kingdom of better liberty and nobler laws.

4. The "straitened gate" stands for obedience. That is a great word. Do you realize what it means? It is hard to obey, but he who obeys is at last fit to command. Then, if you look all over the universe, at stars and pebbles, men and atoms, movements and machines, you will see that only so far as each is obedient to God's laws, as fast as found out, are they doing their part. We often want one thing when the Eternal Right says another. It is hard to take medicine, but the doctor must be obeyed.

V. Class Talks.

Was Jesus severe against the priests and Pharisees? Do you not think he was right? Is there not a danger in religion of thinking that somebody or something will "save" us? What did Jesus say was the way to be "saved"? Are we not too easily inclined to favor our weak points? Do you believe that "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty"? Is not "vigilance" the price of nearly every good thing? Since God has made the world this way, must it not be for the best? What are some of the broad gates and broad roads in our habits? What are some of the narrow gates and roads?

VI. Side-lights.

I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo! it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.— *Proverbs.*

Let us remember that it is not the object of sorrow to overcome, but to elevate; not to conquer us, but that we, by it, should conquer. It converts the thorns that wound us into a crown. It makes us strong by the baptism of tears. The saint is always a hero.— *E. H. Chapin.*

Whatever is hard to be traversed,
Whatever is hard to be acquired,
Whatever is hard to be visited,
Whatever is hard to be performed,—
All this may be accomplished by true devotion.

Hindu.

Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene,— one step enough for me.

John Henry Newman.

Is thy path lonely? Fear it not, for He
Who marks the sparrow's fall is guarding thee.

Anonymous.

LESSON IX.

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

LESSON TEXT.—"Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think."—ROM. xii. 3.

I. THE PARABLE.

And he spake also this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and set all others at naught: Two men went up into the Temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I get. But the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner. I say unto you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. (Luke xviii. 9–14.)

II. AS IT WAS TOLD.

Jesus was all the time suffering from the scorn of those who laughed at him, or despised his humble ways. He had often told the people what he thought of the Pharisees, as a class. In our lessons we have frequently seen him point at their hypocritical ways. But this time he spoke, so it would seem, to the disciples, not for the purpose of warning them against the Pharisees, but to illustrate by a Pharisee the bad, haughty spirit which is too often found in the world. Perhaps some of the disciples were displaying a lofty, proud tone in certain ways.

III. PRAYER.

We see in the life and teaching of Jesus what he thought prayer to be, and how much he used it. Not always by words, and not in many words. Not in certain places and times, and in a fixed manner. Prayer, Jesus taught, is a deep wish of the heart, not a selfish petition for some benefit. It is a desire of the soul, for goodness, strength, light, peace.

IV. THE TWO KINDS.

There is a great deal of wrong talk about prayer, and this parable ought to set us right. The Pharisee went to the Temple, where all the people attended, full of conceit and pride. He thought God smiled on him. So he told God what he was and how much he did, and then added, "Thank Heaven, I am not like this fellow who is near me, worshipping at the same time." He dropped some money in the contribution-box, and felt very happy.

This other "fellow" felt that he needed to be better, and said so. He asked for mercy, and bowed his head, and prayed that his mind and heart might be visited by truth and love. The picture will never fade. Jesus painted forever the two types, one of pride, the other of humility.

V. APPLICATIONS.

1. Of all ugly traits, this one of self-complacency in religion is a blot on Christian character and churches. To see any one loudly showing, "I am holier than thou," brings a blush of shame to manly cheeks. We expect, alas! to find this spirit in society,

and among greedy men; but, where it breaks out in religion, we are made sad indeed.

2. This is the trouble with many sects, as well as with persons. One sect often really says: "I thank God I am not as those are of the other churches. They are all wrong, and sure to be lost: we are the only true Christians, and heaven will be given to us alone." There is just as bad a spirit in those who say, "We have all the truth, and those who do not believe as we do are sinners," as there was in the Pharisee.

3. It is a grand trait in character to admire and praise those who are better than ourselves. Envy is a disease: it grows fast. It leads us to be near-sighted, so that we cannot appreciate anything excellent which is not ours.

4. Humility is not a weakness: it is a sign of manhood. Like a door, it leads into the palace of the King; into the treasures of friendship, knowledge, virtue. We are told that the meek shall inherit the earth,—not because God will put the meek ones into power by his own act: they are the learners, the wise, the good, the truly great, and over and above all noisy, self-seeking ones will finally prevail.

5. With the pride of the Pharisee goes this warning: "With what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged in turn." We all have faults. If we are severe and fault-finding, then others will spy out our weak points, and talk about them, forgetting our good qualities. Who would not be charitable and helpful to the publican? But the Pharisee has invited just the opposite.

VI. Class Talks.

Did the Jews generally offer their prayers in certain places? What did Jesus say about this? What is prayer? Does it need words? Is a hymn ever a prayer? Does a beautiful picture act as a prayer? What do we mean by "bigotry"? Is it not right for every one to be loyal to his faith? What is the difference between an earnest believer and a bigoted one? Do you think humility is a weak trait? Can you recall anything ever said by great men, in books, about their feelings as they grew older? Does a truly great man feel more humble, the higher he rises in fame? Is there not room for improvement in society? Are there not many Pharisees in every-day life?

VII. Side-lights.

Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.—*Beatitudes.*

He that glori th, let him glory in the Lord.—*St. Paul.*

Judge not thy fellow-man until thou be similarly situated.—*Talmud.*

You must not be ashamed to ask what you do not know.—*Arabic.*

Whatever jewels thou wearest on thy brow, only humility can give them lustre. Dear to all hearts is he whom lowliness exalts: his bending is the graceful droop of the branch, laden with fruit.—*Persian.*

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.

James Montgomery.

My mansion called humility,
Heaven's vastest capability.
The further it doth downward bend,
The higher up it doth ascend.

Henry More.

LESSON X.

REVIEW.

I. Finding the Kingdom.

We have learned that there is a kingdom of truth and love, and that we ought to join it: 'tis the kingdom of Heaven, or of God. We find that Jesus talked about it all the time. He did not tell people that they must leave their homes, always, or their own governments, to become members of this new government. Some, indeed, he did ask to leave all and follow him, as disciples. But for most, as for us, he said, "Be good, do good, and act like a child of God."

Now, this was not easy to follow. Jesus compared the effort to a "narrow way": this kingdom could be reached by no other road. So the first thing to remember in review is that it costs something to get to the kingdom, and to build it. Ralph Waldo Emerson was a cheerful, broad soul; but he knew that character came only by hard effort. In some stanzas which he wrote about a meeting-house, he spoke of the "narrow way." Referring to the men and women who had worshipped in this church of old, he says,—

"They live with God; their homes are dust;
Yet here their children pray,
And in this fleeting lifetime trust
To find the narrow way."

II. Our Duty in It.

In the kingdom, or helping to bring it,— for no one ever sees it perfect on earth,— we must use what talents we have. Every one has some ability to do something for the good of man and the glory of God. If we work with hand or head, in high or low place, with the right spirit, then we are doing the right thing and doing the best thing.

III. Courage in the Work.

There will be discouragements all the while. What can we do to meet them, and keep stout heart? The parable of the Leaven and the Mustard-seed tell us to have faith in the growth of the little and the spread of the small. Our business is to start the seeds of truth and goodness, believing that the laws of God are on the side of right and love.

IV. Dig Deep.

Another lesson we learned,— to go down to sure foundation in building character. Our faith in God and man, our religion, must not rest on any outside surface sand, but on sound, deep rock. In his kingdom no one can be a true member who trusts to forms alone, or to professions, or to appearances. There must be sincerity. Thus Jesus appeared to his disciples: —

"No hollow rite, no lifeless creed,
His piercing glance could bear;
But longing hearts which sought him found
That God and heaven were there."

V. The Spirit.

And this, too, we found taught in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, as to the right spirit in the kingdom. It must be one of modesty and charity,— each one bearing the burdens of another, and trying to see the good in other people, trying to mention the merits of our friends rather than their faults. Sunshine will bring out more leaves in spring than frost.

VI. Who Hears?

Very often Jesus ended his talks to the people by saying, "He who hath ears to hear, let him hear." Of course, all within the sound of his voice heard; but they did not, all of them, understand. Jesus meant that some people have understanding ears, and some have hearing ears for the sound, but not for the idea. These parables were frequently not clear to the listeners: they were too spiritual. But Jesus was patient, and often explained them. We must be sure that we have ears to hear the real meaning. The best way is to take a key-word for each parable, as Humility for the Pharisee and the Publican. Then from that word run out all the illustrations you can of that trait. The danger in handling a parable is of making it narrow. There should be a chime of bells rung from it, not one bell sounding alone.

VII. To Teachers.

Ask the class to tell which parable is liked most, and why. See how much is held in memory of the exact language of the parables. Try to have the pupils recall when and under what circumstances they were told. Use the Bible a great deal, for context, and to give the class an idea of the chapters as a whole.

LESSON XI.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

LESSON TEXT.—"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."—MATT. v. 7.

I. THE STORY.

And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And he said unto him, What is written in the law? How readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, desiring to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor? Jesus made answer, and said, A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, which both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance a certain priest was going down that way; and, when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And in like manner a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and, when he saw him, he was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine; and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said, Take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more I, when I come back again, will repay thee. Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. And Jesus said unto him, Go, and do thou likewise. (Luke x. 25-37.)

II. THE HEART OF IT.

What is the lesson at the heart of this parable? When we remember the circumstances, it is clear that Jesus meant something that went right to the foundation of religion as a practical thing. He was not speaking of belief, how we ought to think about God or the future, but answered a serious question,—"What shall I *do* to inherit eternal life?" Surely, a very grave question, and asked, let us hope, by some one who had been stirred by the teaching of the new Prophet. All the listeners eagerly wait for the reply. Jesus makes the man answer himself. Love to God and love to man, in mind and heart, and soul and strength,— this love, put out in every possible form,— was the way to secure life everlasting. Then follows the story to answer the next question, Who is my neighbor?

III. THE LESSONS FROM IT.

We will not try to push this parable beyond its fair bounds, and make it mean more than Jesus intended. But we believe that the truths taught are as follows: —

1. Religion is a help to man, showing him how to find the kingdom of God, and how to build it in each one, and in the world. To have "eternal life" is to have a part in this work. Men differ in their heads, but agree in their hearts. If they are good, and are working for one end, they may think differently about certain things; but they know that nothing but love will answer in making that kingdom.

2. Jesus chose a Samaritan for his example of doing good and showing love. The inhabitants of Samaria were not on good

terms with the Jerusalem citizens. Both sides were at fault. The Jews called the Samaritans heathen and idolaters, and the Samaritans often made trouble for the Jews. But the feeling of the Jews was more bitter. Jesus did not approve all that the Samaritans did. Still, he could not look with favor on the persecution and narrowness that assailed them. In holding up the despised Samaritan for praise, Jesus took an extreme case, the most likely to repel.

3. But how is it all turned? Jesus does not answer the questioner, in one sense. The man asked, "Will you tell me who my neighbor is?" probably thinking of his family relations, or church, or race, or street. Instead of replying to this, Jesus tells the questioner what makes a neighbor; how he, the inquirer, can be a good neighbor,— that is, the answer goes beyond the surface, and touches the source of all practical religion. So, in another sense, Jesus answered the man completely.

4. However, the parable can be looked at both ways. He is our neighbor who is in need, one to whom we can do good; and that means all humanity. On the other hand, he makes a true neighbor who shows this spirit, and overlooks prejudices and enmities and petty divisions.

5. To sum up, the spirit which was in the good Samaritan is the spirit of those who are of the kingdom of Heaven. It was the spirit that filled Jesus, and is found in every true disciple of his. The priest and the Levite were "neighbors" only to those of their own particular kind. They responded not to the call of humanity, but to the claims of a select few.

IV. Now.

There is a great deal for us to think about in this picture-sermon. Good Samaritans are wanted everywhere. The question now is this: Not what are you thinking, but what are you *doing*, to make love to God and love to man more powerful in the world? Are we good neighbors to the poor, struggling, oppressed?

V. Class Talks.

Do you think that the lawyer was in earnest? What was a Levite? Have you ever heard of any hard-hearted cases like this? Where was Samaria? Would you not suppose that the Samaritan might have passed on when he saw an enemy by the roadside? Were the priest and Levite of the same race with the man who was robbed? What kind of a road led from Jerusalem down to Jericho? Are the Japanese our neighbors? Are you a good neighbor to people you do not like? Do you suppose that people can be made to think exactly alike? Can they work together for the good of man? Do all think alike in a family,— brothers, sisters, parents? Can they love one another and make a happy home? Did Jesus demand the same words or belief from everybody?

VI. Side-lights.

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. — *St. Paul.*

Let priest and prophet have their dues,—
The Levite counts but half a man,
Whose proud salvation of the Jews
Shuts out the Good Samaritan.

Oliver Wendell Holmes.

Who is thy neighbor? He whom thou
Hast power to aid or bless;
Whose aching heart or burning brow
Thy soothing hand may press.

W. B. O. Peabody.

The outward church is split up; but there is a church wherein there is harmony,— that is the invisible church, made up of good men.—*Henry Ward Beecher.*

LESSON XII.

THE SHEPHERD AND HIS FLOCK.

LESSON TEXT.—"I am the good shepherd."—JOHN x. 11.

I. THE PARABLE.

And he spake unto them this parable, saying, What man of you, having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. (See also Matt. xviii. 12, 13.)

II. THE THOUGHT.

We might expect that Jesus would use this figure of the shepherd. All over Palestine there were flocks and keepers. In the Old Testament we find the same picture in words: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me by the still waters." Jesus told the people at one time that there were two kinds of shepherds,—the hireling sort and the loyal kind. The first did their duty for pay, and cared little for the real happiness of the flock; the other loved his sheep, and would die for them. The hireling ran away when an enemy came down to steal and scatter. The true keeper stood his ground and protected the frightened creatures.

III. BRANCHES.

So we have several branches to this lesson.

1. The parable at the beginning, which we have used, tells how Jesus looked on his work. He came "to call sinners to repentance"; he came "to heal the sick"; he wanted the prodigal son. The good people, the strong, the faultless, were not first in his eye, though he spoke to all. This is a beautiful parable, and shows us the spirit of Jesus. The good shepherd sees the flock ready to start home for the night; and when all are counted, passing into the fold, he misses one. Only one, out of many. Leaving the rest securely at home, the anxious man goes out over rock and stream in the night to recover that which is lost. Happy is he, at last, to bring the wanderer back.

2. This stands for the love of God. The whole picture shows the pity, the forgiveness, of the Supreme Being. If any one goes wrong, the voice of conscience follows him and calls him back to right and safety. If we wander from duty through carelessness, the eternal truth keeps close after us, showing us our ignorance and folly. If we are boldly defiant, the examples of great, good men surround our way, and tell us to take another course. All this is God acting as the good Shepherd. His loving laws are everywhere.

3. There is another branch on this tree parable. Jesus said, "I know my sheep." He meant that those who were like him in

disposition had the claim to be called his disciples. The Great Teacher did not look for outward badge or set words. He knew how different sheep appear. Sometimes they are marked to distinguish folds. What was his way of calling and knowing? "My sheep know my voice," was his reply. Yes, the voice of Jesus, meaning his spirit and truth, are known to those who really follow him and try to do his work. It is a voice of love, sacrifice, and sincerity.

IV. CHURCHES.

This is a model for ministers and churches. The "gospel" is for those who need help. Of course everybody needs that; for the good can be better, and the learned can be wiser. But ministers and churches ought to be shepherds and flocks, the strong caring for the weak, and the saints lifting up the sinners. It is true, they claim to do this; but there can be a great improvement. Pity, charity, kindness,—in other words, *searching*,—is first duty; and the next is friendship one to another.

V. CLASS TALKS.

Have you ever seen a flock of sheep grazing in the fields? Was there any guard beside the keeper? Is it not easy to frighten sheep? If a lamb grows tired, what does a shepherd do? What was the process at sunset, when the flock came home for the night? What did Jesus mean when he told his disciples that they were soon to be scattered like sheep? In what part of the Bible is the passage about "still waters" and "green pastures"? Have we not learned that no one parable teaches everything? Can you not find objections to this one? Is not the answer to be found in saying that this lesson puts forward one truth,—the spirit of Jesus and the love of God?

VI. SIDE-LIGHTS.

See Israel's gentle Shepherd stand,
With all-engaging charms!
Hark how he calls the tender lambs,
And folds them in his arms.

Philip Doddridge.

"He saves the sheep, the goats he doth not save,"
So rang Tertullian's sentence. . . .
The young Church smiled, and in the Catacombs,
With eyes suffused, but heart all clear and true,
On those walls subterranean, where she hid
Her head in ignominy, death, and tombs,
She her Good Shepherd's hasty image drew;
And on his shoulders, not a lamb, a kid.

Matthew Arnold.

I can trust the mighty Shepherd
Loseth none he ever led;
Somewhere yet a greeting waits me
On the faces of my dead.

W. C. Gannett.

LESSON XIII.

THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD.

LESSON TEXT.—"We are God's fellow-workers."—1 COR. iii. 9.

I. THE PICTURE.

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing in the marketplace idle; and to them he said, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing; and he saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard. And when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers, and pay them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. And when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more: and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they received it, they murmured against the householder, saying, These last have spent but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat. But he answered and said unto one of them, Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take up that which is thine, and go thy way; it is my will to give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Or is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last.

II. THE FIRST WAY.

This parable is not so hard to understand, if we do not try to make it mean more than it was evidently intended to express. Of course there are several ways in which we can look at it, and they are all helpful. These we will notice farther on; but let us ask now, What did Jesus have in mind? First and chief, probably the fact that the Jews were holding back, were not rallying to the support of Jesus, were standing idly looking on, and refusing to give encouragement to the new cause. Just before telling this parable, Jesus said that those who had left home, family, property, comfort, and popularity, for his sake, should inherit eternal life: "But many shall be last that are first, and first that are last."

III. THE SECOND WAY.

In the words quoted above we have a second meaning. The parable refers first to the obstinate ones, who would not accept the new gospel. The next point is the fact that, among those who did follow Jesus, there would be grades of merit. Some would come late into the ranks; but, owing to their great sacrifice and noble spirit, they ought to be considered as among the best and noblest. As, for instance, afterward, Paul was among the last, but he became first of the converts, because of his ability and zeal.

IV. A THIRD WAY.

We easily see another truth in the vineyard picture. Length of service does not always measure credit and claim. Hours and

days are only opportunities in which to do something. The question is not, How long have you served in anything? but, What have you done? Some men live eighty years, and what can you say of them? Others die at thirty years of age, leaving a record of remarkable power. All depends on the intensity and intelligence with which we throw ourselves into the work we are called to do.

V. A Fourth Way.

Along the same line we come upon one more lesson, in answer to the question: Why do they all receive a penny, when these laborers began at different times? Some were ready to go into the vineyard, and take part; but "no one hired them." These were men who had a longing to be at work, were not idlers, but no opening came; they were idle of necessity. So, when once allowed to enter in, they made up for lost time, and were entitled to full pay. You see what this means when you look at the examples of certain great men who were poor and obscure for a long time. But at last opportunity opened its doors, and they rose at once to the highest place in honor and worth. One instance is enough,—Abraham Lincoln or Ulysses Grant. The same truth holds good in Christian life: many saints, now crowned with universal praise, were not at work in the Lord's vineyard until late, for one reason and another; but the "penny" of reward has been given to them.

VI. A Fifth Way.

As a last thought from this parable, we can say that a great deal depends on the spirit in which we do our work, or give our pledges, or stand for anything. Jesus knew that some of his disciples were looking for position, power, and gain of some earthly kind. They may have joined him early at the first; but they would be last in merit, and rank below some tardy comer, who, having left all, threw himself with heart and soul into the cause. The early one would receive a penny for his commonplace length of service, but he must not complain if the eleventh-hour man was also paid alike with him.

VII. Class Talks.

Do you see the particular and the general lessons in this parable? Do you think there was any injustice about the equal payment? Can you see anything in this parable that might apply to "strikes," or to labor troubles of our day? Is there not something here that makes us think of the shepherd and the lost sheep? Did not Jesus say that he cared more for the one lost than for the ninety-and-nine safe and good? Does not this match the lesson today, that the ones who are not easily controlled are the ones of most concern? Do you think all are born alike, with the same talents? What is meant by the "vineyard"? Can we not apply "vineyard" to two things,—the Christian life and, also, the world of duty?

VIII. Side-lights.

God's trumpet wakes the slumbering world;
Now, each man to his post!
The red-cross banner is unfurled:
Who joins the glorious host?

Anonymous.

One man starts ahead, and distances all about him; he will never have an equal, is the verdict of the world. Another, of the same age, stands where he was placed. At last something stirs him, and he starts, too; and, while the first man never stops, the last comes up and runs abreast, or goes ahead.— *Robert Collyer.*

Abide not in the realm of dreams,
O man, however fair it seems;
But with clear eye the present scan,
And hear the call of God and man.

William H. Burleigh.

LESSON XIV.

THE TEN VIRGINS.

LESSON TEXT.—"What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."—MARK xiii. 37.

I. THE PARABLE.

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For the foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. Now while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, Behold, the bridegroom! Come ye forth to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out. But the wise answered, saying, Peradventure there will not be enough for us and you: go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went away to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage feast: and the door was shut. Afterward come also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour. (Matt. xxv. 1-13.)

II. DIFFERENT SIDES.

1. The front, or entrance, side of this parable is not hard to find. The first lesson is watchfulness. "Eternal vigilance" is the price of many things beside liberty. Opportunities come and go quickly. We can never call them back in just the shape they had at first. The photograph is taken at the right instant; the steamer goes out to sea at the high tide. God's laws work steadily; we must be active and ready.

2. But a second side we see, just as important. This parable teaches the necessity of what we may call reserve power. We must not only be watchful, but prepared. A man may be eagerly waiting to go into a hall as soon as the door is opened; but, not having a ticket to show, he is not allowed to enter. The open door does him no good. The five foolish virgins did not have oil in their lamps. Let us see how this idea applies to life and duty.

3. These young women followed a custom in Palestine, and were to meet the bridal pair with lighted lamps. No one could join the gay party as escort without the lamp lighted. The careful ones made ready, filled the lamps with oil, and rested. At the call they were equipped. The careless ones tried in vain to get their empty lamps to burn. All this Jesus meant for his disciples first, and then we draw a lesson for ourselves. If we do not study and get knowledge in youth, we are not ready for demands in middle age. If we are not in earnest about what we do, we cannot hold out in the face of trials.

4. But, further, we must have more oil in our lamps of character than seems needful when we are preparing. A wise lawyer always makes up his case at every possible point, not running any chances. The wise builder puts into the railroad bridge ten times the material needed for ordinary use. Reserve power is strength laid up for special times,—for storms, not alone for fair weather.

5. Very many have called this "oil" faith; others have

called it works. Some say the wise virgins stand for those who are full of the real Christian belief; some say they represent persons full of good works, who let their light shine. In life we see that both are to be used. When we have a great, hard duty to perform, it takes faith and works, both, to make the lamp of our record to shine. We must have a large store of zeal and confidence; we must also show it forth in performance.

6. We need to notice that nothing is said about wicked virgins or good virgins: the difference is "wise" and "foolish," which means that good intentions are not enough in this world. The young women sent away may have been very good, but they were careless and thoughtless. They were intending to be ready, and supposed all would turn out right: they would get into the feast somehow. But good nature cannot take the place of caution and devotion.

7. Let us learn, also, this lesson,—we cannot borrow certain qualities of character or gifts of soul. The foolish ones tried to borrow oil at the last moment. But the wise ones dared not lend, lest their lamps should go out. Indeed, we cannot "lend" truth, goodness, courage, faith, piety. Every one must have these in himself. In examinations, pupils often try to get the oil of scholarship from others secretly.

III. CLASS TALKS.

Do you think this to be a severe parable? Is it not very true? What if God made exceptions? how could we feel sure that right efforts would be rewarded? Do we not suffer just as much when we have an accident as when we hurt ourselves intentionally? Will you read verse 13 in Matthew, chap. v.? Does not the figure of the salt have something the same meaning as this parable? When a singer charms you by a rich song, did you ever stop to think how long it took her to be trained for it? Is it safe for a speaker, or a doctor, or a poet to trust to the moment? Must he not prepare and be ready? How does the figure of a reservoir seem to you, which must always be full, ready to be drawn upon in times of drought? Are there not Christians of a fair-weather and summer kind? What did Jesus think of such persons?

IV. SIDE-LIGHTS.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.— *Ecclesiastes.*

If the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted?— *Matthew.*

A wise man's day is worth a fool's life.— *Arabic.*

It is the part of a wise man to keep himself to-day for tomorrow.— *Cervantes.*

The Lord will come, and not be slow;
His footsteps cannot err:
Before him Righteousness shall go,
His royal harbinger.

John Milton.

Be wise, and use thy wisdom well:
Who wisdom speaks must live it, too.
He is the wisest who can tell
How first he lived, then spake, the true.

Bonar.

LESSON XV.

THE LIGHTED CANDLE.

LESSON TEXT.—"Walk as children of light."—EPH. v. 8.

I. THE SAYINGS.

Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matt. v. 14–16). Also, the parable in Luke, chap. xv., verses 8, 9, 10, where the woman, having lost a piece of silver, lights a candle and sweeps the house, and searches for the missing coin until she finds it.

II. APPLICATIONS.

We have used for our title "The Lighted Candle," because the Revised Version of "the lamp" is not so well known. Both mean the same.

1. Jesus had in mind first, probably, his followers. He wanted them to stand forth and testify. He expected them to be his witnesses. It was dangerous to do it, but there was only one true way. If they believed in his gospel, then they must take a public position of loyalty. We say of persons now: "Let them show their colors. What do they believe? Where are they?" No candle is lighted until the match of honest declaration is applied to it. Is not this greatly the trouble with reforms and good causes? So many are half-hearted. So many talk secretly, and hide their opinions under the bushel of policy or fear.

2. The parable of the woman and the lost coin is in place here, as showing how light has a twofold use: it not only shines and reveals, but it searches and finds. There is the revealing light and the finding light. If we are manly and true, our example is seen; it honors God, and tells our own views. But it also encourages others, who may be timid and hiding, to come out and declare themselves. When a great, good man puts his sacrifice and leadership on the stand, it shines out unto all in the world home. It makes it easier for others to do and be the right. The lost coins are found; the weak are rallied, and a grand result follows.

3. Here comes the old, old truth: we never know who is looking at us to see how we act and what we say. Our influence is wider than we think. Our plain duty is to let our light shine, and leave the rest to God.

4. There is another thought from the Lost Coin: nothing but light will do to use in finding people or in doing good. It will not do to grope around in the dark, hoping to feel the article lost. That is time wasted. When we have any search to make, we must be lighted up with the right, kind spirit, and act intelligently. Light is knowledge; it is also love. Any minister who wants to do good in the world must *know* how to do it, and he must be *anxious* to do it; otherwise he will labor in the dark, and

find nothing. But that is true of every one who seeks to accomplish good.

5. The great lesson out of all this subject, however, is the beauty and power of LIGHT. It is a great word. Jesus called himself the light of the world. The sun is the source of all the life in this world, speaking as to nature and the universe of matter. Truth is light. Joy is light. We ought to be seekers of the light. This word stands for freedom, progress, justice. More light, more right. We are studying the teaching of Jesus; if his words are true, they ought to make us happy and strong. We ought to live freer from fear and evil; our trust in a Heavenly Father should be greater. Do we enter in and enjoy? Are our candles lighted? Do we walk as children of light? There is a great difference between the vain Christian and the earnest Christian: one makes a show of his profession, an artificial light; the other shines naturally, as stars do, in place and quietly.

III. CLASS TALKS.

Has this lesson any reference to selfishness? Do we not hide our light when we refuse to share our blessings with others? To whom did Jesus speak the words about a lighted candle? If he had kept retired, and taught only in villages, do you think Jesus would have been crucified? Did he not see the danger? Is not this always the risk of bold reformers? What are the reasons why people do not let their candle shine before men? Do not some you know, of your friends, seem to be afraid to talk about religion? Ought we to be ashamed to speak and act nobly, because some may laugh at us? Do you suppose a diamond would be properly set if it were put in a pocket?

IV. SIDE-LIGHTS.

Let us therefore put on the armor of light.— *Romans.*

God is light.— *Epistles.*

The Lord is my light and my salvation.— *Psalms.*

The seekers of the light are one,—
One in the freedom of the truth,
  One in the joy of paths untrod,
One in the soul's perennial youth,
  One in the larger thought of God.
Samuel Longfellow.

Walk in the light! and thou shalt own
  Thy darkness passed away;
Because that light hath on thee shone
  In which is perfect day.
Bernard Barton.

Is not light grander than fire? It is the same element in a state of purity.— *Carlyle.*

Our moments of light are moments of happiness; in the mind, when it is clear weather it is fine weather.— *Joubert.*

LESSON XVI.

THE GREAT SUPPER.

LESSON TEXT.— "They shall come from the east and west, and from the north and south, and shall sit down in the kingdom." — LUKE xiii. 29.

I. THE PARABLE.

A certain man made a great supper; and he bade many: and he sent forth his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come: for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a field, and I must needs go out and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. And the servant came, and told his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor and maimed and blind and lame. And the servant said, Lord, what thou didst command is done, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and constrain them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper. (Luke xiv. 16-24.)

II. EXCUSES.

This story has a very clear moral, any one can see it: it points out the habit, so common, of making excuses when we are not ready or willing to do some one thing. Of course, Jesus gave the parable a particular turn, having the people in mind who did not accept his invitation. But there is a great lesson for us all in this "Great Supper," and the help of it runs through all our life.

III. OPPORTUNITY.

This subject was briefly touched in "The Ten Virgins"; it needs more attention. There are times in our lives when open doors stand before us; if we are wise, we enter in. We call them "opportunities." Going to school is one, the opportunity to learn something. Doing a particular kind act is another; making a friend, another; going on a journey, another. And so on. In many of these cases, if we do not take advantage of the "invitation," it never comes again: it is lost, just as yesterday or to-day never comes back. To-morrow is different. These men who were invited to the feast lost their turn; it did not come again.

IV. SHORT-SIGHTEDNESS.

Look at the excuses; they are not good ones. They sound like cheap reasons, made in a hurry. Perhaps these men were honest, some of them, in believing they could not go; but they were short-sighted. Long sight means that you can look far enough to see how things are at a distance: you can tell a mountain from a mole-hill. It seemed more important to these persons, invited to the supper, to be busy about this little duty, or to enjoy this selfish pleasure, than to pay heed to the call of the great man who asked their company.

V. WITH US.

Now, to be frank, boys and girls, men and women, is not this much the same with us? You ought to read a certain fine author,

but just now you are too busy. You ought to go and see that sick friend, but excuse yourself on the ground of some small reason. You are invited to this or that noble act of conscience, but get excused on some petty plea. Then what happens?

VI. We Fall Behind.

Others, not so favored, others who are more unselfish and obedient, are asked to take the vacant places. Don't you suppose that a "heathen," as we call certain ones in other lands, who lives up to his light, and does the best he can, is better than a man in Christian countries, who with all his privileges lives like a "heathen"? Jesus often said that God used the outcasts to confound the proud, favored ones.

VII. At the Top.

One quick look now from the top of the hill,— from the highest point of this lesson. God gives a feast all the time. He invites everybody,— a feast of truth, love, goodness, joy. This world is not a place simply for making money, or for trading, or for having a selfish time in our families. It is an opportunity to grow in soul, to learn about God, to obey his laws, to build the kingdom Jesus described. We ought to be thankful, and accept every invitation our Heavenly Father gives, to remember his kindness, and to honor his name.

"O God, I thank thee for each sight
Of beauty that thy hand doth give."

VIII. Class Talks.

Why do we make excuses? Is it not a dangerous habit? Is it not harder to do an act after we have run away from doing it once or twice? Who is the greater man, a general or a private? What makes the general greater, his uniform? Is it not his ability to see farther and plan wider? What do you think about these excuses given by the men in the parable? Is there another parable in the New Testament somewhat like this? (See Matt., chap. xxii.) There is quite a difference, however; can you tell it?

IX. Side-lights.

Fair are the feet that bring the news
Of gladness unto me;
How many messengers God hath,
If we had eyes to see!

Anonymous.

There never was a day that did not bring its own opportunity for doing good that never could have been done before, and never can be again.—*W. H. Burleigh.*

Each morn unfolds some fresh surprise,
I feast at Life's full board;
And, rising in my inner skies,
Shines forth the thought of God.

F. L. Hosmer.

We live in a new and exceptional age. America is another name for Opportunity. Our whole history appears like a last effort of the Divine Providence in behalf of the human race.— *Emerson.*

Another day to do, to dare,
To use anew my growing strength;
To arm my soul with faith and prayer,
And so win life and thee at length.

Caroline A. Mason.

LESSON XVII.

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES.

LESSON TEXT.—"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."—JOHN xv. 8.

I. THE SAYINGS.

The title of our lesson is in the words of Jesus, not from a parable, but used by him when talking to his disciples, toward the end of his life. You will find them in the fifteenth chapter of John, along with other sayings, many of them referring to the vine. "I am the true vine," said the Master, "and my Father is the husbandman." The vineyards were on every hand in Palestine, and no one could mistake the meaning.

II. TO THE DISCIPLES.

There was a meaning that came home to those who had "left all" and followed Jesus. How easily were they made cowards, some of them! How often they doubted and wanted to go back! But Jesus put new courage into them at all times; he was so calm and strong the disciples kept on. In this way they were branches on the vine of his faith. His strength overcame their weakness. Not only that, Jesus also led them out and up by teaching them more and more about the kingdom. They began to see truth and God for themselves; they grew richer in spiritual power. Just as a child is taught to walk, and begins to act for himself. The branches extended; and then Jesus said, Bear much fruit; that will honor me and glorify your Father.

III. HOW IS IT NOW?

There are two ways of looking at this saying,—first, the Jesus way; then, second, the God way. Both mean the same thing, though one is greater than the other. Jesus is the Founder of Christianity. The truths in it are of God; but Jesus brought them together, and taught the lessons of the "kingdom of Heaven." Churches take his name, and worship in his spirit; they are branches on the Jesus vine. They have a memorial service: children are baptized in his name. Now, the nearer these churches get to the real life of the Founder of Christianity, the more fruitful they are in good works, and love, and righteousness. For Jesus taught love to God and love to man as chief of all things to make men better. So we must remember that it is not the branch that claims Paul, or Calvin, or Wesley, or Channing as the vine that will grow the best, but the branch that is joined to the Jesus who came to bring life and immortality more into the light.

IV. THE FATHER AS HUSBANDMAN.

Jesus also taught another truth connected with this. God is the husbandman of all mankind. We are vines and branches both. "No man liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself." This whole world is bound together, and every boy or girl going into school or into life must start with what has been gained before. We are the branches on the past, and in turn become vines for others after us. We know some things because thinkers

thought hard, inventors planned, reformers battled, poets wrote, before our day. Strike out all that we learn at school, at home, and with our friends, and what kind of a start in life should we have? We would be no better off than a savage in the forest who knows nothing about books or progress.

V. Something to Remember.

Wendell Phillips once said, "To be as good as our fathers, we must be better." He meant that, starting with what people knew before us, we ought to build higher, ought to add something new. Do we? This lesson ought to teach us personal responsibility. What do we mean by that? This,— we ought to have admiration for examples, enthusiasm for the objects Jesus pointed out, a real heart-glow. Two boys read the same biography of Abraham Lincoln: one realizes that he is a branch on the vine of that glorious life, he is stirred and made earnest; the other can tell the facts, but has no personal fire of interest.

VI. In Religion.

So it is in religion. Some learn to talk about it, but are not in earnest. You and I ought to feel grateful for the martyrs, saints, and godly ones who have given us a pure, joyous faith. We ought to be joined in loyal service to them, and through them to our Creator, who is spreading round us the light, air, and dews of blessings untold.

VII. Class Talks.

Did you ever stop to think about this idea of the vine and the branches before? Is it not dangerous to suppose we can get through life alone? What would become of a man who went away and lived on a desert island, with plenty to eat, but no companions? What would you have become, if, when a baby, you had been given to a savage tribe and been brought up with its children? Are we not branches on a great vine of history? What is history but the tracing of the vine of civilization? What do you think churches and Christians need now? Do they not need more of the spirit of Jesus? Do we not feel from him and through him the goodness of God, who was his "husbandman"?

VIII. Side-lights.

Thy living word sprang from the heart of man,
Eternal word of love and liberty,
Fearless thou gav'st it to the winds again;
'Twas manhood's native tongue, and could not die.
To thy dear brotherhood life's pulses leap,
And wakening ages answer, deep to deep.

Samuel Johnson.

I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the growth.— *Paul.*

He who learns sciences, and does not practice what they teach, resembles a man who digs, but does not sow.— *Arabic.*

Deep strike thy roots, O heavenly Vine,
Within our earthly sod,
Most human and yet most divine,
The flower of man and God.

Whittier.

LESSON XVIII.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

LESSON TEXT.—"Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive."—PSALM lxxxvi. 5.

I. THE PARABLE.

A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of thy substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country; and there he wasted his substance with riotous living.

And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that country; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have been filled with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. But when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

And he arose, and came to his father. But while he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and make merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called to him one of the servants, and inquired what these things might be. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

But he was angry, and would not go in: and his father came out, and entreated him. But he answered and said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, and I never transgressed a commandment of thine: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but when this thy son came, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou killest for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that is mine is thine. But it is meet to make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found. (Luke xv. 11–32.)

II. THE HEART OF IT.

After we have settled what is the heart, or chief meaning, of this famous parable, then we can notice some smaller features. What did Jesus aim to teach at the moment he was telling this beautiful story? Probably this: God's love, the Heavenly Father's forgiveness, is ready for those who turn away from wrong and seek the right. A very simple lesson, you will say. But not so understood then, and not quite clear now.

III. THE WORKING-OUT OF IT.

Jesus heard the murmurs of the people: "Here is a man who is a friend of sinners; he eats at their houses. For shame! this is bringing religion down." Yet some of these Jews who were complaining had been taught out of the Law to forgive an enemy many times if he repented. Jesus drew this picture of the home, the kind wise father, and the two sons. The prodigal is forgiven when he comes back in the right, obedient spirit; the elder brother is rebuked for his severe remarks.

IV. What we See.

We see in this story nothing to excuse sin or to overlook wrong. Jesus eat with sinners because he wanted to reform them. He also knew that many of them were not sinners in the real sense, but simply persons who did not believe or act just as the priests and Pharisees demanded. Jesus did not stand afar and cry, "Come, be good; repent!" He went to those who needed help and talked with them, to show the better way. That is the only true course nowadays, if we are in earnest about reforming bad people.

V. Again.

We see that there is no painting of evil-doing so as to make it attractive. What if the prodigal son did have a fatted calf, and a fine robe, and music? think of the sufferings he had endured; of the remorse of conscience he had, and would have; of the lost days and the injuries done to his character. The parable does not say that everything was forgotten. The laws of God cannot be broken. What we sow, that we reap. But we are to understand that the father forgave, and would do all he could to help on his son to a nobler life. So it is with God. When we turn and face the right way, everything helps on; God's smile rests on us.

VI. The Elder Brother.

But a good word must be said for the son who complained. We must not be too harsh, and thrust him out. How many of us would be entirely satisfied in his place? He had been faithful, and steady, and obedient. It did not strike him as fair to give so much attention and favors to a spend-thrift and rioter. This seemed to be a premium on wrong-doing. Remember a parable is a story, not a complete history. Jesus did not give the rest of that family's doings. No doubt the grieved brother saw it all clearer after a while, and the cloud passed away. Jesus taught one thing at a time. In this story he made everything turn on the forgiving nature of God.

VII. Class Talks.

Why is this often called the "pearl" parable? Did not Jesus often say that he wanted to reach the bad people rather than the good? Do you think the elder brother is always treated fairly? Is there any excuse here for doing wrong? Did not Jesus mean to teach that God was surely as kind as an earthly father? Can you mention any passages where this is taught? Are we not to believe that God is much kinder and more forgiving than earthly beings?

VIII. Side-lights.

Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another.—*Paul.*

His goodness stands for all
Unchanged from day to day;
We'll drop our burden at his feet
And bear a song away.

Doddridge.

See, my Father waiting stands;
See, he reaches out his hands;
God is love! I know, I see
There is boundless help for me.

Samuel Longfellow.

LESSON XIX.

THE PRAYER OF JESUS.

LESSON TEXT.—"Thy kingdom come."—MATT. vi. 10.

I. "THE LORD'S PRAYER."

OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN.
HALLOWED BE THY NAME.
THY KINGDOM COME.
THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.
GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD.
AND FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES, AS WE FORGIVE THEM THAT TRESPASS AGAINST US.
AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION;
BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL:
FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM,
AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN.—MATT. VI. 9–13.

II. THE KEY-STONE.

We have come to the end of these lessons on the Teaching of Jesus. Keeping to the parables, or picture side of the gospels, we have not treated many subjects that often appear in manuals of this kind. In a series like this it was necessary to leave out many things; we chose to make our boundary lines the parable teachings. Now we put a key-stone in the arch that has been building; the prayer of Jesus has, in its simple words, the crown and completion of his gospel. What do we mean?

III. TO WHOM?

This prayer tells us to whom we should pray: Our Heavenly Father. Worship must be given to God, who is over all and in all.

It also tells us whose name ought to be most revered,— God's name. "Hallowed be thy name" means reverence. The name of Deity should never be profaned, never be spoken lightly. It is the word that stands for the Supreme, for the Eternal.

This prayer also teaches that we are to expect and ask for one great object: Thy kingdom come. The kingdom that Jesus talked about and worked for unto death, a kingdom of truth and love.

This prayer further points out what we need to ask for in order to bring that kingdom: Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Then follow other simple wishes.

IV. FOR ALL.

Jesus told his hearers that this was the way all ought to pray. It was not, as some claim, a prayer of his own, to be used only by himself and a few disciples. He tried to show his listeners how wrong and foolish much of the praying was that went on at that time. Jesus warned against long prayers, as though God could be moved by many words. He warned against praying loudly in public, to draw attention. Then he uttered this prayer, saying, "After this manner pray ye."

V. Its Great Beauty.

This prayer is like sunlight, good for all places and peoples; a universal one which every human being can utter.

1. It binds together the different denominations of Christians. They can agree on this.

2. It fits the needs of young and old. Infant and grandsire can repeat it together.

3. It is unselfish. There is no asking for something that another may not have. It does not seek to change God.

4. It looks to the one Power from which cometh all life, the Father of Jesus and our Father.

5. It assumes the Brotherhood of man; "Our" Father, not *my* Father.

6. It is a prophecy, because it speaks of a kingdom to come; and every time it is uttered faith is deepened.

7. It is the flower and finish of the parables, the benediction after the gospels, the heavenly song at the end of all Christian teaching.

VI. Class Talks.

Under what circumstances did Jesus utter this prayer? Can you repeat it? Is there another form in Luke? Will you find it and compare the two? Which do you like better? Is there any great difference? Are there not many printed prayers that seem strange by the side of this? Have you ever seen the printed prayers of Theodore Parker? Why are they called so beautiful and expressive? (Ask your teacher.) In what lesson did we study the subject of prayer before? Can we change God by praying? What is the good we get?

VII. Side-lights.

Our Father who art in heaven, proclaim the unity of thy name, and establish thy kingdom perpetually, and reign over us to all eternity.—*Jewish Evening Prayer.*

Father of all: in every age,
In every clime adored,
By saint, by savage, or by sage,
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord!

To thee whose temple is all space,
Whose altar earth, sea, skies,
One chorus let all beings raise,
All nature's incense rise.

Alexander Pope.

When, on some strain of music,
Our thoughts are wafted high;
When, touched with tender pity,
Kind tear-drops dim the eye;
When thrilled by scenes of grandeur
Or moved to deeds of love,
Do we not give thee worship,
O God in heaven above?

M. J. Savage.

The Lord's Prayer is one which the lowliest sinner may utter, which the holiest saint cannot outgrow.—*James Freeman Clarke.*

"Continuing instant in prayer," this is what every true man of us is doing. "Pray without ceasing," this is an injunction which a sound mind in a sound body must perforce obey.

J. W. Chadwick.

LESSON XX.

REVIEW AND SUMMARY.

We will now go over the nine lessons which have followed since the last review.

1. THE GOOD SAMARITAN. Lesson Text.—"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."—MATT. v. 7.

Under what circumstances did Jesus tell this parable? He was answering a lawyer who said, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" What did Jesus reply? That he should love God and man with all his heart, soul, strength, and mind. What next question did this man ask? "Who is my neighbor?" Then, what took place? Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan. What kind of a road led from Jerusalem to Jericho? A rough, dangerous one, full of robbers. What does the parable teach? That he is our neighbor who needs our help, and that a good neighbor is always full of helpfulness.

2. THE SHEPHERD AND HIS FLOCK. Lesson Text.—"I am the good shepherd."—JOHN x. 11.

What does this tell us? Of a shepherd who left ninety and nine sheep to go for one that was lost. What is the meaning of this? Jesus came to find sinners and heal the sick. What two kinds of shepherds did Jesus speak of? The bad kind, that ran away when danger came, and left the sheep; and the good shepherd, who protected the flock. What did he call himself? "The Good Shepherd."

3. THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD. Lesson Text.—"We are God's fellow-workers."—1 COR. iii. 9.

What is this story? Of a man who hired laborers at different hours in the day and paid them all alike at the end. What was said by the workmen? Some complained because they did not get more pay. What was the reply? The one who hired said, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" What do we learn from this? That the spirit in which we do our work is the chief thing. Was there any other truth taught? Yes, that many find their place in the world late, but do so well in a short time that they deserve as much as if they had begun earlier.

4. THE TEN VIRGINS. Lesson Text.—"What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."—MARK xiii. 37.

What does this parable illustrate? A custom in oriental lands of celebrating a wedding. Who are the characters in this scene? Ten virgins, five foolish and five wise. Why are they divided this way? Five filled their lamps ready to light, and five did not; so when the bridegroom appeared the five careless ones could not go in to the feast. What does this teach us? That carelessness brings punishment. Did we learn anything else? Yes, that we must keep the oil of caution and care in good supply.

5. THE LIGHTED CANDLE. Lesson Text.— "Walk as children of light."— EPH. v. 8.

To whom did Jesus address this talk? To his disciples. What other way did he describe them? "Ye are the salt of the earth." What did he mean by all this? That if we believe in his teaching we ought to show it. How did Jesus often speak of himself? "I am the light of the world."

6. THE GREAT SUPPER. Lesson Text.— "They shall come from the east and west, and from the north and south, and shall sit down in the kingdom."— LUKE xiii. 29.

What is described here? A great supper and excuses from those who were invited. What did the host do? He felt indignant, and sent out and brought in the poor, blind, and lame. Why did he act in this way? Because he thought those who were first invited made poor excuses. What does this mean for us? There are two teachings: one is that Jesus has invited to his gospel, and yet many make excuse; the other, that in every-day life we are always excusing ourselves from doing what we ought to do. What then is the result? Others come in and take our place.

7. THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES. Lesson Text.— "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."— JOHN xv. 8.

How did the disciples think of themselves? As branches on the true vine. Whom did Jesus call "Husbandman"? God. What is history? A great vine on which the nations grow. What is the spirit of Jesus? A great vine on which the churches grow. What does the parable chiefly teach? That we depend on one another.

8. THE PRODIGAL SON. Lesson Text.— "Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive."— PSALM lxxxvi. 5.

What is this sometimes called? "The Pearl Parable." Why? Because it shows so tenderly the love of God. Why did Jesus tell this? Because some were complaining that he treated bad people so kindly. Why did he do it? To make them better. What is the great lesson in this parable? That our Heavenly Father is ready to forgive.

9. THE PRAYER OF JESUS. Lesson Text.— "Thy kingdom come."— MATT. vi. 10.

What are the three things you can say of this prayer? It crowns all of Jesus' teaching. It binds together all mankind. It asks for the chiefest of all blessings, God's kingdom.

TO TEACHERS.— We suggest to teachers that they have their pupils commit as much of the above to memory as is deemed wise. The lesson texts are of great value and should be associated with the parables so far as possible. The task of learning these things may seem rather hard, but memory enriched by such material will always prove a good treasure-house for the mature man or woman to draw upon.

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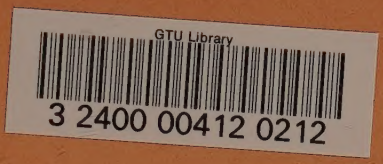

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